SIGHT AND SOUND

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ARTICLES:

WHITHER THE FILM?
NEWS FROM NEW YORK
AN EXHIBITOR'S VIEW
BRITISH LABOUR PROBLEMS
THE TEN FILM CLASSICS

CONTRIBUTORS:

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George H. Elvin
J. Fairgrieve
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Sight and Sound

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THE TEN CLASSICS

Mr. Oakley's article has aroused much interest. From the replies received we include the following:

Mr. ERNEST LINDGREN, Curator of the National Film Library, writes:—

WHEN, IN his stimulating "Quiz on Film Classics" in the last number of SIGHT AND SOUND, Mr. Oakley made bold to suggest a list of ten outstanding classics for use in film appreciation work, he certainly touched the fuse to a whole gunpowder barrel of controversy. His list is bound to surprise everybody and raises the key-question: What are to be one's criteria in selecting such a list of ten films? To my mind, they should all be, as nearly as maybe, works of art, imbued with a deep and sensitive insight into life. Secondly (it follows from the first but is worth stating separately), they should be marked by superlative craftsmanship; that is to say, they should be the kind of film one can see over and over again without weariness, the kind one can analyze and dissect—not only without injury, but with gain. Thirdly, the group as a whole should, as far as possible, represent a variety of theme and of style. Myself, I would suggest *The Birth of a Nation* (or perhaps even better *Intolerance*) for Griffith, and *Battleship Potemkin* for Eisenstein.

Both these films are silent, of course.

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To exemplify the best which has been achieved in the selective use of sound also, I would add Pabst's *Kameradschaft* and a film of Renoir, say *La Bête Humaine* (although, if I were asked to include simply any recent French film, not necessarily Renoir, I must confess I should prefer the brilliantly constructed *Quai des Brumes*).

To these I should add *The Italian Straw Hat*, for comedy; *Vaudeville* for its brilliant use of the camera; *The Informer* (or *Grapes of Wrath*) to represent the best of modern American production; and one Swedish film (possibly *The Atonement of Gosta Berling* to represent that effective fusion of background with action which has been called by the somewhat shadowy word "atmosphere"). Finally, I feel there should perhaps be a place for Stroheim's *Greed*, although as I have never seen this film, I am unable to justify its inclusion with any conviction.

Only nine, you say! I must confess I cannot fill the tenth place, and even my selection of nine, I should find it very difficult to defend against many alternatives which come to my mind. In my opinion, only *Potemkin*, *Vaudeville* and the Griffith film have undisputable right to appear there.

Like the game which requires one to jettison various specialists or celebrities from a hypothetical balloon, it is amusing enough to speculate on in fun, but would be a terrifying choice to have to make in earnest.

Mr. NEWPORT of Bath, chooses :—

Stagecoach (John Ford), chosen as a remarkable presentation of different types, and one of the best Westerns ever made.

Of Mice and Men (Lewis Milestone). His interpretation of Steinbeck's story of doomed lives is an outstanding achievement.

City Lights (Chaplin). One of his best films. A good example of the vein of pathos running through his works.

It Happened One Night (Frank Capra). A very entertaining and well told story.

The Stars Look Down (Carol Reed). Well made film successfully depicting poverty and despair, and containing good camera work.

Rebecca (Alfred Hitchcock). Sheer dramatic beauty, with very fine photography.

Quiet Wedding (Anthony Asquith). A very English comedy, and one of the most successful works of its kind.

Fury (Fritz Lang). For drama, psychological interpretation, and handling of crowd scenes.

The Lady Vanishes (Hitchcock). For masterly handling of suspense, with an undercurrent of humour.

Bank Holiday (Carol Reed). For the presentation of different types each with his or her own problem, and well knit together as a whole.

And Mr. R. MIDDLETON, of Ealing:

An exact list of the "Ten Best" is always a very difficult selection to make. I would include these films with some mentioned in the two lists in SIGHT AND SOUND, in a list from which to make a final selection:—

Murnau's *Faust*
Earth
Song of Ceylon
Night Mail
Chaplin's *The Pilgrim*—in preference to *The Gold Rush*
The Student of Prague—silent version with Conrad Veidt
Carnet de Bal
Le Rosier de Madame Husson
La Maternelle
Pinoccio
Caligari.

I do not think I would include *The Lady Vanishes*. For a Hitchcock film, the choice would be between *Sabotage* and *Young and Innocent*.

Whither our Business?

asks

F. L. Thomas, well-known film publicist

AMERICA has been plunged into war, and the burning question of the moment has become "What is going to be the effect on the cinema?" So much so, that quite a number of papers have immediately started anticipating a film famine.

This I think suggests too grim a view, but just what is going to be the effect of this war on United States' output now that Hollywood is under direct threat of both air and sea attack from Japan, and having to face the necessity of adapting itself to the needs of a country at war? We can remember the effect on British film production and Hollywood may well look to Britain and obtain the benefit of her experiences. America, shocked to the core, has learned—it can happen there.

What happened here? With the declaration of war, close to panic followed. Theatres shut down en masse. Wardour Street evacuated. Film stocks hastily removed to safe depots—this for fire safety purposes. The picture distributors stopped their advertising. The future looked black. But, as events turned out, these were obvious precautions taken by an industry, whose country was facing an unknown future practically unprepared.

Within a very few days, the cinemas re-opened their doors. Advertisements began to appear and to all intents and purposes, a normal state of business resumed. Developments since that time have included drastic curtailments of raw materials, heavy calls on man-power, restrictions on studio space and the like. The British producer's lot has not been a happy one, and they might only grudgingly agree the Government have helped them, and remembering the struggles of the British film man in the last war decided that production in this country must remain a force and have done very much to ease the burdens of the studios. They have, for instance, kept in force the Quota Act, which, although not answering all the problems that beset the producer, does in fact insist that a certain percentage of British films shall be made by importers of foreign films.

British Production

Furthermore, they have endeavoured to disturb as little as possible the technical personnel at the studios. I can hear producers getting up in arms and shrieking that to keep their studio personnel together has been one of their biggest difficulties. Nevertheless, they still are making films and important films, and I think they must consider that in a country fighting for its life, and more concerned with the production of munitions, this is remarkable.

America had the British experience of these early days to go on. There was no sudden closure of cinemas. This admittedly being largely due to their geographical position, and except for the sudden shock to the nation as a whole, with the necessity of being prepared for blackout restrictions and possible curtailment of night shooting, Hollywood is carrying on much as before.

Daily cables are being received in London offices of American producers to the effect that the ambitious schedules planned before America's entry are to be maintained.

The extent to which her man-power will be called upon depends on the development of the American Conscription Bill. Many artists are voluntarily going to the Colours, but their man-power situation is so vastly different from that which exists here. They have enormous resources on which to draw, and compulsory calls will surely not be so acutely felt. In due course, there may be restrictions on materials. Here again they may not be, in fact I doubt that they will be, so drastic. Again, because America's resources are practically unlimited. Wood, and the raw stock for film, two very big items in film making are, so to speak, at their very door. In England, by comparison, much of our timber and all of our raw stock is imported.

Whither then the feature? For it is the feature, loosely described as "the big film" that we all pay to see. It's the bait in the advertising.

The Second Feature

Don't we often hear a condescending remark "Oh, the second feature was quite good"? This, in fact, sums up its real position in the business, but it is that big film which is the foundation of the whole industry that concerns us most. They will and must continue to be made. The film industry believes, and they are widely supported by both Government and Civic authorities, that the industry plays a vital part in the war effort by maintaining public morale. That flow of high grade pictures must be kept constant.

It seems obvious however, that if the demands of war are such that the film business must forego some of its essential material, then the smaller picture, the second feature, will feel the pinch first. As one writer has already put it, "the big, the good, the entertainment film must and will stay. The small, cheap filler, that second feature, will be scuttled."

Small Men Out

Callous as the thought may be, many small independent producers may go to the wall. We have seen it happen here in other branches of business, the small retailer, the general goods store, has gone down under the burdens of wartime restrictions. It is one of the penalties of our present-day existence. The big man, and certainly the big film man, with his larger resources can stay the course longer, so I foresee it happening in Hollywood, assuming always that the war, so far as it concerns America, lasts long enough to bring about any drastic curtailment of supplies.

But what will be the effect on us? The people who pay for their film fare. And if it happens—when?

Let's make a stock survey. The majority of the picture distributors have sufficient films ready for distribution; that is, made and in their hands to last six months based on the rate of one per week to theatres. Assuming that Hollywood has stocks of essentials and assuming, reasonably, I believe, they will not feel the pinch of the man-power call-up for another six months, theatres should not feel any cuts for at least twelve months. At the end of that time, we may see the gradual disappearance of the second feature. I venture to say that this will be of benefit not only to the industry, but to the film-goer.

There has been far too great a tendency on the part of the average theatre owner to give too great a value for money. There have been cases of programmes as long as $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours, all for the single price of admission. Maybe there are sections of the public that expect and demand this. Many of us, however, have stopped to see one film—the big film—and are resentful, nay physically exhausted, at the end of that $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours. Suppose all theatre men were to adopt this long programme policy. Then even in the halcyon days of peace, the film business

is so constituted it could never hope to keep up the supply to meet such a demand. Look at it purely from the selfish view point of a keen film-goer. As one myself, I would be far happier and certainly more satisfied if the industry gave me for my admission price one good feature, with an interesting short, and never failing me with the news reel.

The aim of most of the distributors is the delivery of one picture a week. What is this but a glorified sausage machine?

Can any organisation, no matter its size, deal faithfully with a subject; that is, write it, film it, print it, publicise it, and all in the space of seven days! For that in essentials is what it means. Admittedly, no feature film yet has been made in a week, but this farcical situation is only avoided by the simultaneous shooting of perhaps eleven or twelve films in one studio. Controlling all this may be one man directing operations. As energetic as he might be, surely his efforts would show better results if his attention could be given to one, two, or say at the most, three subjects at a time. Whatever the studio resources, as at present constituted, no proper time can be given even to the story selection, let alone its making. The whole basis seems wrong.

Thus, if Hollywood and England, and other production centres are forced to reduce their output, what then will be the effect? There will be a demand for films that cannot be met—not on the present basis of a change of programme once a week or even, as is now a very common course, twice a week.

Longer Runs

The result will be what the trade have wanted for years, but through their own constitution, have failed to achieve—extended playing time. This obviously describes the period which any film runs at any one theatre.

Outside of London, with one or two notable exceptions, films run for, at the most, one week. Frequently in London they run for what the industry grandiosely describe as a "season". That season may be of six weeks duration at the most. It then goes to the provinces on sometimes a three-day run, but a maximum of a six-day run. In this short period, films are often missed by a very large section of the film-going public and we are often asked by people "Where can I see *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* or *Cavalcade*," etc., etc. If they ask this often enough, word trickles back to the distributor and he decides some money might be made by putting out this film again.

Surely then the lesson is that on its first release the film gets insufficient "playing time". Else why this system of re-issue? The public may indeed welcome the re-issue of a film because they have heard it talked about, but have missed it on its rounds. Wouldn't it be better, therefore, to give them a chance of seeing it on its initial and what might be, in the future, its only release. The adoption of a single feature policy with its attendant "extended playing time" will, I am certain in the long run, be welcomed by film-goers and most certainly it will prove valuable to the trade itself.

So war conditions may put an end to this mass production and enable the deserving picture to have the widest possible and longest possible distribution.

British films since the days of the last war have made commendably rapid strides, and have gained an entry into the American market that they never before enjoyed. One other development of the post 1918 era has been the advent here of American technicians and stars. Quite a lot of antipathy was felt at this influx. Surely, however, here was an unsolicited tribute to the fact that British studios were at last demanding the

attention of the more successful Hollywood film makers.

One effect of the present war may be the development of this exchange of stars and technicians, going beyond mere reciprocity, reaching a real union between the two interdependent film industries. This is something that again must benefit us—the film-goers. We will be getting the best in both technical and histrionic abilities of two continents, and if the early effects of the reduction in quantity may irritate, the resulting all-round improvement in quality will more than balance the "short measure".

Don't Smother the Child

JYMPSON HARMAN *Evening News* Film Critic

THE DRAMATIC CRITIC said that most film critics were no more than "snotty-nosed little office boys." Yes, he did: I'm not inventing it. On other subjects he is a cultured man; of attainments in his own line almost as considerable as his own estimation of them.

It is a well-known fact that the more a man loves the theatre the more vitriolic he will be about the virile, challenging cinema. But the main excuse of the theatre people for their violent attacks on the cinema is the artistic shortcomings of our producers. Well, all right. So what?

Critics Want Too Much

The trouble with dramatic critics is that they are always looking for masterpieces. A good show is not enough for them. They are only happy when they are in at the birth of a classic.

I told this expert that all dramatic critics suffer from a perpetual inferiority complex brought about because they missed the chance of being invited to a first-night at the Temple of Dionysus or Shakespeare's "Globe" at Bankside. They are forever frustrated men.

Film critics are frustrated too. But they don't fly into passions of condemnation because every fowl offered for their inspection is not a swan. Soon after I began writing film criticism for the *Evening News* 21 years ago I decided that if I was going to protest every time a movie fell short of perfection according to such artistic standards as you can apply to a screenplay, I would develop into a pretty dull writer. And my job, like that of the movie makers, is, in the first place, to entertain my public. (Pardon the phrase!)

All right, I said to my conscience, people *like* this sort of thing. They didn't ought to, but you won't make them change their minds by telling them all the time what a lot of nit-wits they are. Better take every chance of pointing out the good things in films, hoping that as the years pass public appreciation of real film art will increase. Destructive comment on worthless movies gets no one anywhere; constructive analysis must step in sooner or later.

I claim no distinction in arriving at this startling conclusion. Other critics writing in popular papers were just as smart as I was, and I think that if you take a quick mental glance at the movies of the last quarter of a century you must agree that constructive criticism has seeped in—not only into the minds and tastes of movie goers but of the movie makers as well. In the last adding up the movie makers have to do what their masters in the nine-

pennies tell them to do. That's a great thought and none of us should ever allow a succession of "tripe" to make us lose sight of it.

My Yardstick

Having thus robbed myself of any artistic standards by which I could measure my movies, I had to find another yardstick of film values. And here I come to the *credo* which I insist no critic of such a universal entertainment as the cinema can deny.

Critics of books, music, painting and all the other arts know the public for whom they are writing. (I take it for granted, of course, that any critic's first duty is to his reader, though I am not sure that all writers on the arts agree with me in practice.)

In cinema matters, especially when you write for a popular journal, you do not know whether you are writing for a don or a docker. Tom likes this sort of show, Bob likes that, sister Susie prefers another. The critic's personal point of view is ruled out; better so because critics can become very stale in their subject. And it isn't good enough to say that this is the sort of thing you will like if you like this sort of thing. Oh, no! That's lazy, and the least line of resistance usually lands you in the soup.

So, when I look at a picture professionally I say to myself, maybe, "Heavens, how it stinks! But is this the sort of thing some people like? And if so, how successfully have the producer and his team brought off what they set out to do." Judging by such standards when I reviewed *Way Down East*, I did not have to worry myself about whether Griffith had invented any new technical effects. I left that to the highbrows, contenting myself with saying that Griffith had made a perfect reproduction of classic, old-fashioned melodrama. Or words to that effect: I cannot remember now. At once the misguided guy who likes nothing better than old-fashioned melodrama (and it's still a free country) knew that he would like *Way Down East*.

I welcomed *Smiling Through* as a perfectly produced bit of sentimentalism, and I am prepared to do the same with the coming new version. But if elements have been introduced that detract from the lyric qualities of this dear old sobbie, I shall seize on this point with all four banks of my typewriter.

The Acid Test

I prefer the Marx Brothers at their best to any Harold Lloyd comedy. But I would not judge the films of either just from the point of view of funny pictures: I would try to decide how true to their respective styles each was and leave the rest to the reader.

But all the foregoing is not to suggest that I am a low-brow. In the grand old days of the silent Continental films I was as lofty as the best at the New Gallery on a Sunday afternoon. We were getting places then. Films were becoming an art—and I will tell you what film art is in a minute.

Came the dawn of the talkies and goodbye to all that. I howled against talkies, prophesied the doom of the cinema and have lived to eat my words.

But do not let us lose sight of the fact that dialogue is not the most worthy handmaiden of the movie art. Basically the art of the screen is pictorial. Photography and montage are still its prime factors. Next comes music, then acting (of a specialised kind) and, last of all, talk.

On this last point, I enjoyed *Hold Back the Dawn* most because of its practical use of what was unfortunately called "narratage" in its pioneer days. The American aptitude for finding a silly name for a simple thing killed "narratage"—that, plus a dreary story that would never have been popular in any form.

I was asking for "narratage" soon after talkies came in—the ability for the screen to put over psychology,

character study and jumps in place and time without tedious speeches to hold up the action. But I never expected anything so ill-advised as *Power and the Glory*.

Hold Back the Dawn was a much better effort. Here Charles Boyer was able to display much more psychology by the method of allowing him to fill up the story gaps "off-stage" than would have been possible with twice as much dialogue in the ordinary sense of the word.

The Value of Music

I put music before acting in its importance to a film. So did Griffith, secretly. He once admitted to me that half of the success of his films was due to the musical accompaniment. Next time you see a frightfully moving scene on the screen ask yourself—providing there is music, as there usually is in these scenes—how much you are being moved by the acting and how much is due to the subconscious influence of the music. You want to see scenes in the studio theatre before the music is put on to appreciate the point. I know. I've done it.

But I don't rule the actor out. It's a fine art, acting for the movies, much more difficult than the average stage star realises or enjoys in the practice. Charles Laughton was always telling me that he envied a man like Gary Cooper his ease in the studio and on the screen. Yet Charles is no mean actor. But he admitted that he was an inspirational actor: he has little of Gary's technique for kidding you that he is living his part. And if it came to choosing between them for a creative interpretation of a ticklish part I would choose Charles every time—if he could only forget that he is an actor!

I suppose a first-class Disney provides us with the nearest approximation to the perfect film today—a Disney like *The Old Mill* or *Dumbo*, not like that shapeless conglomeration of good Disney's, *Fantasia*.

But Disney has all the luck. If only he could draw human figures without making them look like caricatures he would hold all the cards!

* * *

So there I am revealed; a frustrated critic in search of the perfect movie. How near have I got to it? Well, Flaherty's *Man of Aran*, with all its faults, thrilled me by its beautiful photography and clever montage; the original *Pepe Le Moko* seemed to be almost ideal "theatre" movie; so for that matter did a number of the pre-war French talkies, despite their slightly monotonous obsession by dirt and dreariness.

Then I recall ecstatic moments with an old German "silent," Ludwig Berger's *Cinderella;* I was stirred somewhat by Lang's *Siegfried*, and bored by *Caligari* because it was too extreme. Oh, and I cried for joy over *It Happened One Night*, and at one time thought *Forbidden Paradise* the finest thing I had ever seen.

That's me all over. Just a sucker for a movie. And if I may dare breathe heresy in SIGHT AND SOUND, don't let's risk making them too highbrow before they can walk.

News from India

Kine Weekly reports that a scheme of visual education, unique in India in its scope, was inaugurated recently by the Government of Bombay. Under it, motion pictures will be shown regularly in even the smallest villages in the Provinces.

Films will deal chiefly with rural subjects, such as agriculture, cattle, sheep and poultry farming, health, sanitation, and with the war and other subjects of interest. A complete new programme will be provided every two weeks, so that when the scheme is in full operation villagers will be very little behind the townsmen.

In the inauguration of the scheme the Government is working in close collaboration with the Film Advisory Board of the Government of India.

Films of 1941

by EVELYN RUSSELL

"TELL ME," said Bill Felton, "when you say a picture's good, what do you mean?"

Now Bill Felton and his missus look after a block of offices near to where I live and once a week they "go to the pictures". They always tell me which film they have seen and like to talk about it. Their comments have been interesting. So when Bill asked me a leading question I felt it was up to me to reply. When I had finished he said, "Funny, ain't it—we mean just the same thing—you and me, 'cos all you've been saying is they've got to seem real, and that's what I think, too! Mind you," he went on, "I'm not talking about Disney. He's a blinking marvel, but that's different."

And of course, Disney films *are* different and cannot be spoken of comparatively except as between each other.

The best of the Disney films this year is undoubtedly *Dumbo*, the most interesting, *Fantasia*; the one for its brilliant but kindly application of human emotions to animated puppets and the other for its experimental colour translation and satirical comment through that medium. The excellent intrusion of "L'Apprenti Sorcier", and the Chinese Mushroom sequence to encourage those not particularly interested in music does not detract from the main idea, although each of them could so easily appear in any cinema programme as a short.

When I say that a film is a good film I mean "a good film".

(1) the story has the right shape and balance.

(2) The direction shows some subtle sense of situation and of the personalities in the story but at the same time does not lose sight of the strength of straightforwardness in treatment.

(3) The production is impeccable in set and/or location and/or period detail.

(4) The casting is faultless.

(5) The acting, not only of the chief characters, but also of the supporting cast is as good as possible.

(6) The camera and sound work is technically perfect.

If there is a touch of genius in any or several of these "departments" then the film is superlative and the superlative of good is "best".

Were there any "best" films according to this standard among the 500, more or less, films shown in 1941?

Yes, the following films have, to my mind, all I ask for in my definitions.

Love on the Dole, with that extra something in John Baxter's direction, particularly good crowd casting, and an inspired performance from young Geoffrey Hibberd as Larry Hardcastle in a magnificent cast.

Quiet Wedding, in lighter vein, with no subtlety missed by Antony Asquith and as good team work from ace artists as any comedy could have.

Then, of course, *49th Parallel*, a grand story with particular appeal at the moment, superb photography and most admirable acting, especially from Eric Portman.

I include *All This and Heaven Too*, not only for its direction and acting—Bette Davis and Charles Boyer are the chief protagonists—but because the film version and the characters as portrayed therein are identical with the original novel. And that, I should say, is almost unique.

The lighting and photography give *The Letter* that extra touch we so often fail to find in a film, although the per-

formances of Bette Davis and James Stephenson of themselves put this film in the "best" category.

The great Charles Boyer

Olivia de Haviland, by a similar token, brings *Hold Back the Dawn*, superbly directed by Mitchell Leison, well into the picture. Her performance as the little American school teacher who falls for the cynical, mercenary gigolo is quite unforgettable. The gigolo being Charles Boyer, it was no wonder really, for that grand artist, be he untidy, broke and careless as in this film, or soigné, successful and carefree as in *Appointment for Love*, contrives to be quite irresistible.

And talking of *Appointment for Love*, delightful comedy that it is, cleverly and delicately handled by William A. Seiter, with Margaret Sullavan to help make it one of the "best", what a performance from Gus Schilling as the lift man!

It can, of course, also lead to complications as unfolded in *The Great Lie*, directed in a masterly way by Edmund Goulding, but with an outstanding performance by Mary Astor as Sandra. She has immense acting ability. So, too, has Joan Crawford. She gives an amazing performance in *A Woman's Face*, in which she depicts the gradual change in a woman's character from evil to good as her long-scarred face is restored to normal and she realises she is beautiful. George Cukor and Victor Saville have certainly produced here a film of exceptional dramatic quality.

Vincent Sherman is responsible for *Underground*, the most moving, convincingly acted and well-directed film of its type in 1941.

Target for Tonight comes in "best" on this score too. Who but those in the know could detect studio from actuality shots?

This question of illusion in films is a sore point but a most important one. So many otherwise excellent films have sequences which strike a false note somewhere or other and so upset the value of the whole production.

That cannot be said, however, of *Sergeant York*. Even if this story were not a true one, it is so well told, so admirably directed, so realistically photographed, that Howard Hughes is to be congratulated on a fine achievement. Gary Cooper never puts a foot wrong in the name part and Margaret Wycherly's performance as Alvin's trusting but inarticulate mother is unforgettable.

Just as fine in its way, being, one is given to understand, the true story of Katherine Hepburn's early life, is *The Philadelphia Story*. It is sophisticated comedy in its best sense. The witty dialogue reveals a deep knowledge of human nature and the acting and direction, too, have that extra touch which makes the film scintillate.

Sturges and Kane

Preston Sturges has given *The Lady Eve* for my "best" list. Deft, imaginative, sure handling with a brilliant performance by Barbara Standwyck gives this film right of place.

As for *Citizen Kane*, wicked, exhausting, satirical, clever *Citizen Kane*, experiment in new camera angles as it is, I must see it again and then again, for each time I see it I find something that I had missed before. But it's no film for relaxation. Its author-actor-director Orson Welles is a man apart.

He does share one distinction, however, with another, and that a woman—Martha Scott. (*Cheers for Miss Bishop.*) They both know how to grow old naturally and convincingly.

There has been a spate of films during the last year, portraying this particular adventure, but I can think of no one else who has grown, decade by decade as we watched, into the so-called sere and yellow.

It was gratifying to see Alfred Hitchcock come in at the last lap running true to his old form in

Suspicion. He didn't need to travel his company over the whole of Europe and back again this time to achieve the thrills and suspense of *The Lady Vanishes*. He has taken an English story ("Before the Fact", by Francis Iles) which, except for a honeymoon abroad indicated for the main part by foreign labels on trunks, does not move from the English countryside, and his artists, especially Joan Fontaine, have responded to his magical touch in no uncertain manner.

Bravo Britain

Forty-six British-made films released in 1941—four of them go in my "best" category.

Roughly 450 American-made films released—twelve of them "best" by the same standards.

Considering the extraordinary difficulties with which British film makers have had to contend that is not too bad, is it? The Americans may soon have similar trials and tribulations to deal with and the comparison will then have a fairer basis. There have been several near-misses for the "best" stakes from our own studios and of course some from the other side too, but so many "Also-rans" have been sent across the herring pond for our delectation—irritation would be a better word—that, on percentage, our record of achievement is higher than would at first appear and is certainly very encouraging.

News from New York

HERMAN G. WEINBERG

THEY WILL tell you that *How Green Was My Valley* is the most distinguished American film of the last quarter but don't you believe it. John Ford proves in it that he's no better than his scenario, which is a dull thing relieved only by the opportunity it gives Donald Crisp for a tender and moving performance. England's *Stars Look Down* and *Love on the Dole* were much better. Hollywood does not often succeed with *genre* films—*The Informer* was an accident and *Wuthering Heights* much more than that, but that, to at least this observer, is because Wyler is the greater director. Dieterle's *All That Money Can Buy*, based on Benet's *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, a less pretentious film, is decidedly superior, a shrewdly contrived piece of early Americana, astonishing for a foreigner to have made.

It has, in fact, been a season of disasters for the big names in the cinema, with the exception of the perrennial Disney, who goes on to prove that he has an inexhaustible fount of imagination from which to draw for his creative fancy. *Dumbo*, his latest, is a delight, and the pink-elephant sequence beats the surrealists at their own game. As for the rest, it has been catastrophic. You already know about Renè Clair's fiasco with *The Flame of New Orleans*, so be prepared to learn that Duvivier has done no better with *Lydia*, a pale and embarrassingly inept copy of his *Carnet de Bal;* nor has Jean Renoir added to his stature with *Swamp Water*, a Hollywood film début so ignominious as to make one disgusted with the producers who could give the man who made *La Grande Illusion* so impossible a story. Even

Hitchcock has not been able to recapture that first fine careless rapture he had in England and his new film, *Suspicion*, which might at the very least have been not worse than *Rebecca* as an excursion into the macabre, emerged as a diluted version of an interesting psychological story, which added up to nothing but *ennui* at the end. And Milestone's *My Life with Caroline* is laughable for the director of *Of Mice and Men* and *All Quiet on the Western Front* to have made. That leaves a few interesting second-rate films, *Hold Back the Dawn*, which could have been a moving story of refugees trying to enter America, and *A Yank in the R.A.F.*, which could have concerned itself less with its silly love story and more with the subject on hand. Both are slick, well made, and flip movie entertainment. If you don't mind the opportunities both missed for something much better, they're your dish. A young newcomer, John Huston, made the most interesting film of the season, *The Maltese Falcon*, but then a Dashiell Hammett story almost can't miss on the screen, they're so well-knit.

Britain supplants France

Now that there are no French films left to show in New York, British films have been filling the breach nicely. *Target for Tonight* was a big hit; *This England* less so (but only because it is weak as a film); and *Laburnum Grove* has just opened to great acclaim. Carol Reed's brief *Letter from Home* scored a considerable *succès d'estime* with the critics. A British cinema is now functioning as a show window for the new films from England on Broadway. Russian films have been very successful again. Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky*, with its startling prophetic overtones, has been revived; Pudovkin's *General Suvorov* has a large success, which is now being duplicated by the film biography of the Soviet flier, Chkalov, *Wings of Victory*.

Films to come

The forthcoming season augurs better. Orson Welles is doing Tarkington's *The Magnificent Ambersons;* Disney has completed *Bambi*, from Salten's life of a deer, and will introduce two new characters, a parrot and a *gaucho*, inspired by his recent South American trip, in future short films; Fritz Lang is guiding Jean Gabin through his first American film, *Moontide*, for which Salvador Dali has been engaged to do a dream sequence; Josef von Sternberg has completed *The Shanghai Gesture;* Julien Duvivier will try again to recapture his old rapture with *Tales of Manhattan*, which will be something like *If I Had a Million;* King Vidor has completed *H. P. Pulham, Esq.;* Capra is doing *Arsenic and Old Lace*, from the stage hit; Lewis Milestone will do Steinbeck's *The Red Pony;* Gabriel Pascal will do Shaw's *Arms and the Man*, with Ginger Rogers and Cary Grant; Preston Sturgess, the brightest new talent since the memorable advent of Lubitsch, will offer *Sullavan's Travels;* Max Fleischer has a new feature-length cartoon, *Mr. Bug Goes to Town;* Garbo has completed *Two Faced Woman*, a comedy which has run into astonishly hostile censorship difficulty at this writing (the Archbishop of the New York diocese having condemned it as a "danger to public morality and that witnessing it may be an occasion of sin.") Korda is doing Kipling's *Jungle Book;* Disney has announced *Peter Pan* to follow *Bambi;* and, believe it or not Ben Hecht will do the script and direct Gypsy Rose Lee's *The G-String Murder Case*. But the best news of all is that Chaplin is re-issuing *The Gold Rush*, with an original musical score, additional scenes not in the first version, and a commentary by himself, and that in the spring he will embark

on a new film, something called *Lady Killer*, dealing satirically with the Bluebeard legend.

War Films

The Senate sub-committee's investigation of Hollywood as a hot-bed of anti-Nazi propaganda having fizzled out into nothing, the film capital has gone ahead with its programme as scheduled. Among those to be seen this winter will be *Passage for Bordeaux*, with Michele Morgan; *Paris Calling*, with Elizabeth Bergner; Lubitsch's *To Be or Not To Be*, with Jack Benny and Carole Lombard; Eric Knight's *This Above All;* Hitchcock's *Saboteur*, from an original story; the Milestone-Ivens documentary on the first four months of the Nazi-Russian war, with Elliot Paul as narrator; *Channel Float* 18*; International Squadron; Captains of the Clouds; Bombardier*, on the development of the Norden bomb-sight; *Polonaise*, on the invasion of Poland; the Canadian-made 49*th Parallel; Eagle Squadron*, on the American contingent serving with the R.A.F.; Richard Oswald's re-make of *The Captain of Koepenick*, satirising Nazism instead of Kaiserism of Zuckmayer's original; *China Caravan;* and Disney's projected feature built on the folk songs of all the conquered nations of Europe.

Hollywood goes to it

There isn't a deader pigeon anywhere than the late senate sub-committee's investigation of Hollywood as a hot-bed of anti-Nazi propaganda. Our entry into the war made monkeys of Wheeler, Nye and Lindbergh, and the telegraph keys on Wake Island had hardly finished clicking off the first report of the Japanese attack when Paramount announced the first film to pay tribute to the gallant stand made by our marines on that outpost. On the flood of the nation's abysmal contempt for the Japanese treachery, the inexorable will of the American people to live as free men will be reflected in a great wave of anti-Axis films, already in production in every studio, as well as in direct action with the enemy, wherever he may be found. The sudden appearance of Winston Churchill in our midst came as a sort of rapturous surprise, and the first news reels of the British Prime Minister posing with President Roosevelt at the White House, a magnificently dramatic "shoulder to shoulder" symbol in the war effort, set audiences here off into wild applause.

Anachronisms

All of which is also why Josef von Sternberg's "comeback" as a director with *The Shanghai Gesture* is a fiasco. No film dealing with pre-war China can have the breath of life in it any more. The resistance at Chungking and Hong Kong was more dramatic than all the heavy-lidded sirens soaked in an erotic atmosphere that even the exotic brain of von Sternberg can conjure. Yet even as an "escapist" film it is a dull and passionless thing; its scenario having been so emasculated by the Hays office that all of the titillating sultriness of the original play by John Colton (at best never more than a second-rate achievement) has been lost. To what purpose, then? One recalls *Pepe le Moko*, and *The Shanghai Gesture* becomes kindergarten stuff in comparison. One recalls even the wicked, translucent crystal of von Sternberg's lens photographing Dietrich's legs in *The Blue Angel*, or her smile in *The Devil is a Woman*. Perhaps it is because Pygmalion has lost his Galatea; perhaps it is because Hollywood ought to revoke the Hays office for the duration. But eunuchs shouldn't masquerade as Don Juans. We aren't in the mood to be kidded these days.

Sound Recordist Ken Cameron Protests

I HAVE just finished reading SIGHT AND SOUND. It seemed to me then that there were more absurdities, more pretentious nonsense herded between two covers than I have seen for many a day.

Miss Cross deals in strong terms with music for the cinema. She tells us "even when someone fresh is allowed to write the 'incidental' music to a so-called serious film, they are so cowed that they do it in their sleep, and merely cough up the good old phrases which indicate 'came the dawn' or 'a gallant ship sailed on to her doom,' etc., *ad infinitum*. . . . after all, perhaps some people would like to hear what the pair of them are saying." I am not grumbling at the choice of adjectives "incidental" and "serious," although I think that they are scarcely well-chosen. I protest at the gross, sweeping overstatement. In most major American films the music is superbly composed, played and recorded. Some of the "fresh" people over there like Aaron Copland and Virgil Thomson have pulled off the most magnificent tricks of suspense and drama. Even in this country they are beginning to learn. Men like Dick Addinsell and John Greenwood, in collaboration with Muir Mathieson are turning out results which are unsurpassed anywhere. As for the remark on music drowning dialogue, this is an attack on the re-recording engineer which may have been warranted on a very few occasions in the past, but is now completely without justification. But no, Miss Cross, with the airy superiority which betrays one who knows nothing about it, condemns all. Music is, in her own words, plain lousy.

Some two paragraphs later, this self-same critic speaks about "the general run of shorts and features" being "so lamentably feeble." I'm not quite sure what she means by "features," but from the context I gather that the term is a generalisation for any film from a news reel upwards which supports the "big film." As one who is quite actively engaged in short film production I resent this remark. I think that by far the greater majority of thinking filmgoers would infinitely rather see two or three good class shorts than any second feature. And I feel sure that the standard of short films has never been as high as it is today.

A Blow for Mr. Bulleid

Now, with the reader's delight in criticism I turn to Mr. Bulleid. The author of "Trick Effects with a Ciné Camera" tells us how to analyse a film.

To the ordinary bloke who pays his ninepence to see a film there are a few minor difficulties in his procedure, but every true cinéaste knows that the major renters would be only too glad to lend copies and viewing facilities in return for a detailed analysis showing just where the editor slipped up. The analyst must always remember that Mr. Bulleid insists upon the presence of a "well-arranged" magnifying glass for the examination. Obviously: if the glass were ill-arranged the observer might find himself analysing the key numbers. A few lines later we are told that "another facility only acquired after a year or two is that of being able to find one's place in the reel without lengthy groping". I should think that after a year or two analysing a film frame by frame through a well-arranged magnifying glass, one would be so eye-strained that it would be impossible to find anything.

We are told to make comprehensive

lists of credits. Strangely, although the names of assistants, derivation experts (whatever they may be), special effects artists, and so on seem to be of paramount importance, the recording side of a film is completely neglected. Being a little that way inclined myself, perhaps I may be biased, but if every cut, every optical, all the montage, camera-angle, balance, rhythm and suchlike mumbo-jumbo is so important, then I think the absence of any comment on sound must be due to either insanity or ignorance. Or perhaps Mr. Bulleid is still so busy wading through *Intolerance* that he has not yet reached *The Singing Fool*. . . .

A lot of us are still so simple and undiscerning that we get into a habit of judging a film by the general impression with which we leave it. In fact, we take the film as a whole. Some of us even have the quaint, old-fashioned idea that technical work is at its best when it is least obtrusive. We get a pleasant little feeling when something particularly choice appears on the screen (or even emerges from the loudspeakers), and some of the experts have been known to give a patronising smile of encouragement when a particular specimen of the Capra touch or the Hitchcock touch or some other touch is revealed. Still, let Mr. Bulleid carry on with his analyses. One day we'll all have some fun, analysing the analysis. I'll wager we give Mr. B. a shock or two.

An Exhibitor Hits Back

Hector McCullie answers Elizabeth Cross

THERE are lots of things WE don't like about our films—especially the prices we have to pay for them—but what the heck is the good of US complaining to the Renters—we don't get no place! *You* try!

Remember we only present what the Producers produce for your entertainment, and if you don't like the musical backgrounds, even though they are by Ralph Vaughan Williams, Arthur Bliss, Richard Addinsell and many other well-known contributors, then we must recommend you to tell the producers that they are wasting money in trying to put good music into films.

You hardly realise it, dear patron, but you have become a large army of "punters" who week by week, consult the lay-press critic in whom you place especial confidence and follow this tipster's "selections for the week." Three stars for a film make it a "favourite", two stars, a good runner-up, and one star, a "possible outsider." How often have you put your "bob" on the "tipster's" favourite, only to find that the only "unstarred" runner of the week has romped away with the popular "Entertainment Stakes" and has paid your less gullible neighbour a big dividend when he invested his "bob" at another cinema? But like the devotees of the Turf you still follow the critics who, so often let you down.

We know one of your complaints is, "Why, if we miss a picture on its general release date showing, do you make it vanish until about a year later it turns up for a one-day Sunday show?" Don't blame us—like yourselves, dear disappointed patron, we, are the victims of a system, which considers there is

some subtlety in "plastering" a film all over the district for a week, and then giving you the "run-around" enquiring where you can see that film your next-door neighbour said was so good last week.

Pity the Manager!

And, please, oh! please do not chide your cinema manager for making you pay to see a film which left you "cold." He, poor lamb, can only tell you that there are still some persons in our midst, who consider the patrons in Wapping and Windsor to have exactly the same tastes, and expect every film to be as successful with you in Bournemouth as it was with the patrons in Blackburn. Give us credit for trying to do the impossible! You pay your eighteen pennies to us on a Sunday night, and having expended that sum you quite rightly expect us to give you eighteenpennyworth of entertainment. Do you know that out of your eighteen pennies we have to deduct four for Entertainment Tax, and then from the remaining fourteen pennies we may have to deduct yet another penny and three farthings for "Sunday Charity" (blessed word!) "Tax"? We are only allowed to retain twelve pence and one farthing to provide you with that eighteen pennyworth of entertainment you have paid for and expect.

Despite these burdens which we carry, you still insist on giving us more "headaches." There is the small boy hesitantly approaching the box office attracted thereto by the prospect of enjoying a forbidden "A" certificated film. (We'll wager your favourite tipster gave it three of his precious stars.) To our enquiring staff he solemnly proclaims himself to be over sixteen years of age, and therefore quite impervious to any undesirable influences which may have affected him last week before he had enjoyed his sixteenth birthday and this sudden maturity. "One nine, please."

One week later the same small boy arrives in company with you, his loving parents, who in taking tickets, blandly proclaim the "boy of sixteen" to be—"My dear, he's just twelve"—"Two nines and *a half* please!"

The Patron's to blame!

Oh, yes!—our programmes are far too long. We agree! But you have probably learnt that we are oppressed, subjugated, beaten and individually driven out in the concentration camp of cinematic SYSTEM. There is a powerful theory in this system, that having sat through two hours of the tribulations of "Emma, Lady Hamilton," the "balance" must be preserved by satiating you with another ninety minutes devoted to the seductive adventures of some notorious nonentity known as the "Flame of New Orleans." Of course, *your* mental balance is knocked awry in the process, but the cinema's bank balance doesn't seem to have suffered any ill effects. Like you, dear patron, we should not raise one of our noble eyebrows should perchance one of our magnificent magnates acquire control of the Royal Albert Hall to present a five-hour programme of the London Philharmonic Orchestra "supported" by Miss Nellie Wallace; which would surely encourage a rival magnificent magnate to take over "The Empire Stadium" to present a six-hour "stupendous," "gigantic," "never-before," etc., etc., "bill" of the Sadlers Wells Ballet plus Mr. Max Miller. You see we try to please all of you (twenty-three millions of you every week) all of the time. And then you say we're conceited! Forgive us for speaking the truth, but really, dear patron, you are to blame for most of the evils of which you complain to us.

Those "shorts" you criticise, and those "commentators" you so dislike, are really the offspring of your psychological make-up.

The English (Scots, please note the

distinction) are notoriously gullible, politically, sociologically and cinematically, and knowing as we and the producers do that any attempt to "elevate" you is resented, we invariably "appease" you by throwing a piece of sugar into your lair when we make our incursions into the realms of "instruction." We think we are reasonably sound in this, as *The Life of the Mayfly* or the *Evolution of the Earwig* would have been more attractive to us in our childhood if our mentor had been the worthy Mr. Emmett. In fact like you, dear patron, our young pageboy really believes that the emblem of Malaya is the "sarong" and the patron "saint" of the South Seas is Dorothy Lamour. (Leslie Charteris, please note!) Similarly, there is an idea prevalent in the minds of the mighty-producers some three thousand miles from this blessed isle, that Mr. Westbrook van Hoorius is God's-gift to our "Sound-heads" and that the "scientists" of Los Angeles discovered that "Time" — (*long pause*) — "Mooches On!" Here in England we have got used to "bombers" but in the "New World," apparently it takes scores of "bombers" to compete for the pleasure of carrying off one blonde.

As anticipated, twenty-three millions of you, gullibly paid to witness this devastating spectacle, which although it warmed your emotions, the credit for it was "frozen" by the heartless Englishman who then happened to be the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

We still don't know which was the most attractive to you—the thousand bombers or the one blonde! The price we had to pay the renters was based on the thousand bombers, which again proves that we are the victims of the machine. We still, financially and gentlemanly, prefer blondes! Even when *they* are "ersatz" and New-World "mass-produced" the renters demand 50 per cent of our box office takings!

Quantity tells! The only compensating balance is in the fact that quantities of bombers or quantities of blondes invariably bring us quantities of patrons. One blonde, like one bomber, means "no star" from your lay-press "tipsters," and the female, like the devastating machine, must have strong "fighter" support. Exhibitors' and producers' errors of omissions are like their errors of commissions—big! Your voluminous patronage and the increasing popularity which you have so profusely bestowed upon us, have done much to create these "systems" which many of us (and mercifully not all of us) have found necessary for dealing with mass-patronage. If we have become stereotyped the fault is not all ours. Your overwhelming response to our formula for presenting entertainment, has tended to suppress that individualism which did so much in those early days of pioneering and experiment.

If we have largely taken quantity for our measurement of "progress", you dear patron, in the first place approved the standard of measurement, so that you can hardly complain.

Can You Wonder?

Ten thousand projectors each consuming 100 feet of celluloid per minute on three hundred and sixty-five days of the year, have to be kept fed with what the producers make available for us to pass on to you. Can you wonder, if we have become machine-like in our methods of entertaining you and dealing with your criticisms? Can you wonder if we have (some of us), had to deal with you and cater for you by remote control which some of us call "Centralisation," and that we have to some extent allowed our vision of the individual to become obscured by the collective mass?

So long, fans! See you in the "nines" to-night!—if you haven't moved back into the 1*s.* 6*d.*'s under cover of darkness!

BRITISH LABOUR PROBLEMS

by George H. Elvin, F.C.I.S.

General Secretary of the Association of Cine-Technicians

THE FIRST effect of the war on film production, as on all other industries, was the steady loss of a large number of its employees to the Armed Forces. The Association of Cine-Technicians, has had called up, or volunteered, over a third of its pre-war membership. The loss of the other unions is at least as high. On the other hand the volume of production has increased; the small decrease in feature production being far more than off-set by the great expansion of short film production, films for Government Departments, the Services and so on. The industry would have been completely unable to cope with these demands but for the insistence of the trade unions that the Government's manpower policy must bear a close relation to its film demands. On three occasions since the outbreak of war we have been threatened with de-reservation of all film production labour of military age. On each occasion we have got the policy reversed. Now a specially appointed Ministry of Labour film Man Power Panel has produced a report, accepted in substance by the Minister, which will ensure a reasonable nucleus of film technicians and other labour being retained for film production.

Enter the Women

This nucleus must, of course, be reinforced by women and other trainees. This is being done, and women are now doing jobs which had hitherto been exclusively done by men. Sound Camera Operators in the studios and laboratory printers are just two examples. The unions have not objected to this, as the employers agreed to the necessary safeguards demanded by them. The principle of equal pay for equal work has been accepted for dilutees. First preference for such jobs has been given to wives of serving members. A.C.T. has opened a War Emergency Membership Section in which such technicians are placed.

No More Casual Work

Many of the pre-war factors which mitigated against a decent industry have disappeared, we hope never to return. Casual employment is largely non-existent. Most workers (both hourly and weekly servants) are permanently employed at one studio, if not always by the one company, which in many cases will be impracticable. The few who still free-lance have no difficulty in moving straight from one job to another. The producer who from time to time brought such discredit on the industry is largely a bugbear of the past. An employer who wants cheap labour will find there is none for him to have. He must pay the proper rates. The benefits have shown themselves on the screen, the technical quality of British production being higher than it has ever been in the past. For the first time technicians are no longer asked to work long hours without adequate recompense. On the whole, less unreasonable hours (more conducive to a higher standard of product) are worked, but when overtime is necessary all employees except technicians in the highest grades

receive additional payment for the first time in the history of British film production.

The laboratories threaten to become a serious bottleneck in production. Their losses to the Armed Forces have been greater than in the studios but their work has increased enormously. Women and youngsters have been introduced, but in insufficient numbers to keep hours down to normal. But they could not have been introduced in greater numbers, partly owing to the shortage of skilled personnel to train them, partly because the skilled people remaining are so busy they have little time to give such training, and partly because of the difficulty in obtaining fresh labour. One laboratory, which has been working over twenty hours overtime a week, recently had a special job which had to be done on top of their existing work, although it meant working over 40 hours overtime for that week. This can be done occasionally, but much repetition is likely to produce such a strain on the workers as will cause breakdowns in health, and a consequent still greater hold-up in film processing.

Strong Unions

Before the war trade unionism was strong. Now it is even stronger. There is scarcely a film production worker outside his or her appropriate organisation. The war has brought many additional problems to the trade unions. It has also shown the employee that his interests cannot be properly safeguarded except through a collective organisation. In our own industry the problems of stimulating film production (particularly in the early days of the war when the Government did not seem over-anxious to preserve the industry), of call-up and reservation, of dilution and training, of war-time wage problems such as cost-of-living bonuses, are all matters which have been successfully handled by the trade unions. Further, the workers are expressing an increasing concern in the general organisation and efficiency of their industry; one of the A.C.T.'s recent activities is to produce a report on Efficiency in Film Production, detailing from its members' wealth of practical experience many instances of how the industry has not been efficient in the past and how such matters can be remedied.

The war, too, has turned into a practicality an aspiration which British film technicians have always had whereby they might make their own films co-operatively amongst themselves. The workers at Denham Studios (directors, cameramen and other technicians, electricians, carpenters and so on) have all got together through their Works Committee and formed "Our Unit". The Ministry of Information have promised distribution of the unit's first short which went on the floor in January. The entire cost of the film was raised before production commenced by the workers themselves, but they have been greatly helped by the studio, who have given them floor space, and Kodak who have donated the stock.

Service Units Coming

Finally, a word about those serving in the Forces. All those called up (with a handful of exceptions) have joined the Royal Navy, Army or Air Force in the ordinary way to do an ordinary job. There were no Service Film Units. Now the Royal Navy has a small unit; the Army Film Unit and the R.A.F. Film Unit have been formed and are developing on a more ambitious scale. There has been the closest possible co-operation between the Army, the R.A.F. and the A.C.T., as a result of which most of the technicians called up for one or other of these Services have been, or are about to be transferred to their appropriate film unit; except, of course,

those engaged on special duties who cannot be spared and those who prefer to remain at their present Service job. The result of this policy is already showing itself on the screen. Recent films from Tobruk and the Norwegian Commando Raid, for example, were taken by such members, and are amongst the best war material yet received. In addition to this front-line work, the two units are taking Studio space in the near future. As long as overlapping with other production companies is avoided, the industry as a whole can only benefit from this new wing of increased activity. Further, it will provide a valuable medium through which film workers in the Forces can continue to work at their trade and so will be in a position to return to the more general mediums of production after the war none the worse—in fact, even more skilled—than when they left it.

The Supply of Films for Teaching Regional Geography in Post-Primary Schools

by J. FAIRGRIEVE, M.A., F.R.G.S.

IT WAS suggested to the Film Institute that we should find out what films existed and what were the films which did not exist but which were most desired. Actually this investigation about geography films has been in progress for about a dozen years but there are and have been such numbers of films that may be classed as geographical that it has been a long piece of work.

A new catalogue of geography films arranged in regions is now in process of production and this gives an opportunity of taking stock which has not occurred before. A catalogue has existed but the regional arrangement was not complete and the value of most of the films was unknown.

In the last catalogue about 800 films were listed; in the present issue there are just over 600. A good number of films, about 100, have been added, but there have been more omissions. The omissions are of four kinds:

(1) Continental films that are not now obtainable.
(2) Films issued by Ensign Ltd. which no longer exist.
(3) Subject films (as distinct from regional films) of which a separate catalogue will be issued.
(4) Films of the Central Film Library.

Of the omissions the most important are those of the Central Film Library since it is impossible without taking these into account to give an adequate conspectus of what exists. These have been omitted because the Film Institute has not as yet published any reviews of these films in the *Bulletin*, but the difficulties are now overcome.

Of the 600 films in the catalogue about 400 have been viewed and assessments published in the *Bulletin*, leaving just over 200 films listed in the *Bulletin* to be viewed in addition to those of the Central Library. Enough films, however, have now been reviewed to enable us to have some kind of idea of the degree to which the supply of films meets the needs of geography teaching, and the following is an attempt to state the position as far as schools having children over the age of 11 are concerned.

No Adequate Supply Yet

With 600 films in the catalogue and the others known to exist, it might be thought that the supply of regional geography films is at least adequate, but this is not the case. It is difficult without reviews of the Central Library films to find out what useful films of the British Empire exist, but even so, some lop-sidedness is evident in the numbers of films available for showing different regions. For example, there are four of Alaska but only two of New England; there are four of New Guinea but only two of China and none at all of Thailand, Java or Sumatra; there are eighteen of Portugal but only one of Spain (Majorca); there are two each of the Solomon Islands and of Egypt; also, while there are 110 of England and Wales and 54 of Scotland, there are only three of Ireland.

Even so, it might be thought that there are enough for all practical purposes. To decide this point it will be helpful to examine the question of the time available for showing films in schools. First take the case of the Senior Schools having children of ages from 11 to 14 for three years. It is not likely that more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours on the average will be given to geography in each week of each year. Experience would suggest that of the 52 weeks of the year probably about 36 will be given to the actual teaching of any one subject; holidays, examinations, school journeys, functions and unexpected happenings of one sort or another will absorb the rest. That is to say that in these three years about 160 hours altogether will be allowed for the teaching and learning of *the whole world*. If it is remembered, as something to supply a scale, that there are 168 hours in a week, it is obvious that time must be used as economically as possible; as time is necessary for the use of maps, still pictures, blackboard work, writing, handwork, wireless and other activities to supplement the fundamental reading and oral lessons, it is equally obvious that it is impossible to give much time to films.

The Time Factor

It has to be remembered also that what is said, read or done once is normally not learned; there must be revision and repeated revision. The same applies to what is seen on the screen in the form of instructional films. Something no doubt sticks after one viewing, at least for a while, but it is again obvious that in the case of instructional films repetition, probably more than once, is desirable or necessary.* For revision of various kinds it is probable that about half the teaching time is taken up, i.e. about 80 to 100 hours are all that are available for the first presentation of the geographical facts of the whole world. The teaching of the British Isles takes up a good proportion of this time and it is probably fairly correct to say that about 10 hours will be allowed for the first presentation of the facts about each of the continents of Europe, Asia, Africa, North America, South America and for Australasia.

How much of this can be given to films? It would be a very generous, indeed an outside estimate, to say that one-fifth or two hours per continent on the average may be given to films, background or teaching, in very favourable circumstances.

The cases of Central and Secondary schools are not greatly different. In these the corresponding curriculum extends over four or five years but it is doubtful whether the actual amount of time given to regional geography instructional films is greatly different. It has to be remembered that no account has been taken of subject films dealing for example with physical

*It depends upon the kind of educational (as distinct from instructional) films whether or not this consideration applies to such films.

geography, the evolution of land forms, clouds and rain, structure, economic geography, mapwork and the like, which are more considered in secondary schools than in senior schools but which also should be used to some extent in senior schools.

Many Gaps

With more than 600 films in existence it might seem that, with perhaps a few omissions made good, there would be more than enough to choose from. When the content of these geography films that exist is examined, however, it is found that a very large proportion of them do not fit easily into the syllabus of any school, some because of their content, some because of the method of presentation of the content. A very great number are background films at the best.

This can be made evident in various ways.

(1) In the Report on Geography Teaching Films issued by the British Film Institute in 1938 there is a list of regional geography films that were considered by the Geography Committee to be those most necessary. In this list no suggestions are made for films on the British Isles "because the making of such a series is not so urgent owing to the abundance of material that exists". Approximately 80 films are suggested but an examination of the 400 films in the new catalogue, which have been reviewed in the *Bulletin* and their contents noted, shows that only some six or seven come anywhere near the specification given for any one of these 80 films. Some, indeed, nearly fit part of the specification of a film but are too long as whole films. The only disability of Kodak's film of *Corn* is that it takes up too much time; I have, however, had it cut down to half the length which represents about the proportion of the suggested film given to the subject. It is, of course, possible that another committee might give different specifications or that the same committee might now say something different, but there is at least some indication that the regional geography films now in existence are lacking in essential teaching qualities.

Unbalanced Production

(2) The matter may be looked at from another angle. Of the 400 films that have been viewed, about a quarter may be considered excellent or good films, as films, and others have some value. But they are not, for various reasons, equally useful. Some do not deal with subjects in a normal geography syllabus. *Washing Day in Portugal* is a very interesting little film for Juniors, but most of those who teach geography to older children would definitely prefer something that would deal more directly with the geography of Portugal. Others deal with a subject which fits into the syllabus but not in a way in which it fits, e.g., an excellent film shows peanuts in the Transvaal, whereas peanuts, if they come in at all, are normally considered in connection with the geography of West Africa. Another good film deals with the mining of slate in Cornwall, while most schools would prefer the scenes of slate mining to be laid in North Wales. *Shamba Ya Chai* is an excellent film on tea-growing in Tanganyika, but tea-growing would be considered in connection with India, Ceylon or China, and there certainly would not be time to duplicate the subject. Some films which deal with subjects in the syllabus in the way in which these fit into the syllabus are unlikely to be used because of their length. *Shamba Ya Katani*, another good film, deals with sisal in Tanganyika, i.e. just where it comes into the syllabus, but it runs for 12 minutes, which is a little too long for the relative importance of that product. An excellent film of slate in North

Wales is out of the question for most schools since it takes up three reels. It would be scarcely practicable in a well balanced school film programme to give up even half an hour of the two hours allowed for films of a continent to a two-reeler, however good, whether it is a background film or a teaching film. In the absence of a really satisfactory collection of school films some such as the above are used, as are other really unsatisfactory films, but if there were well arranged collections of school films it is doubtful whether they would have more than occasional use.

Even films that are quite short may be too long when the importance of the subject is taken into account. The film on peanuts noted above runs for eight minutes, but even this is too long; pretty certainly all that is of value could be shown in four. Obviously it would be better to have longer and more complete films—if they were good ones—rather than shorter ones, but the time available is the dominating factor in this as in all school teaching.

(3) Of the 100 excellent or good films about one-third are on the Americas (North, Central and West Indies and South), one-third are on the British Isles and one-third on the rest of the world. There are about a dozen on Europe of which more than half are on Portugal. There are no really good or useful films of several of the most important countries of Europe.

Thus, for one reason or another, a very considerable proportion of the films in the catalogue are really unsuitable for school use and there are gaps. In fact, however one looks at it, the impression is given that even though there are some hundreds of films available, and though numbers of them are being used, yet geography teachers are by no means as well supplied with films as are, say, the teachers engaged in Physical Training. Only a very few, personally and pessimistically I should say well under a dozen, would be included in a really adequate collection of regional geography teaching films. Many of the others are not bad films; they have some value. Many are used, but they are not as economical of time as teachers have a right to expect. We cannot afford to spend two minutes doing what can be done in one, and often done better in one, taking time which ought to be spent on something else.

The kind of films that are in use encourages teachers either just to show them to their classes or to give a desultory talk about them. This in turn leads headmasters who "would use films in every geography lesson", as one told me recently, to ban them for a term "in order that the children may learn some geography."

Conclusions

The conclusions seem to be that:

(*a*) There is a sufficient supply of background films for the present.

(*b*) It is pretty obvious that one of the chief causes which is holding up the growth of the use of films in geography teaching is just the lack of a supply of classroom films that teachers can really use in teaching.

(*c*) Probably no two geography teachers would agree on every film in a short list, but if a collection of 100 short films to "cover" the continents were got together by some experienced teacher, it is probable that it would be extensively used.

(*d*) As it is practically impossible to go all over the world to take shots for these 100 films that geography teachers would use, it would seem necessary to provide the films in some other way.

(*e*) A good deal of useful material is in existence but, as it stands, not in a form suitable for use in school.

(*f*) A beginning might be made in getting together an adequate small collection of teaching films by a re-editing of this material in a form that is useful in school.

News from the Societies

British Film Institute

The eighth Annual General Meeting of the British Film Institute, which was held on December 4th, was amongst the best attended that has ever taken place. Sir William Brass, chairman of the Governing Body, took the chair in the absence of the Duke of Sutherland, the Institute's President. In presenting the Annual Report for adoption Sir William commented on the useful work which had been accomplished during the year and in particular the continued development of the National Film Library and its Loan or Film Appreciation Section; the new Educational Campaign, of which Mr. Gillett has already written on his first impressions in these pages; and finally of the very heavy but useful work which the Institute has undertaken in arranging between 50 and 60 full-length programmes a week for approved schools, prisons, units of H.M. Forces, schools, colleges and groups of refugees.

Of the Institute's work in the near future Sir William commented on the fact that the Education Panel was preparing a memorandum on "The Place of Optical Aids in Post-War Education". The National Film Library Committee hopes to develop its policy of making available typical extracts from well-known films so that the student could get the flavour of the film without the necessity of running it through from end to end.

In conclusion, Sir William spoke of the Governors' appreciation of the magnificent way in which the regional organisations of the Institute were carrying on despite all the difficulties of the present time.

National Film Library

Two interesting groups of films have recently been added to the National Film Library's Preservation Section. The first is a gift from the Directors of G-B.I. of the following five films which they consider to be most representative of the Secrets of Life series: *Life in the Hedgerows*, *The Tough 'Un*, *Sea Urchin*, *Kings in Exile* and *Ducks and Drakes*. It is hoped later to get a corresponding collection of the earlier Secrets of Nature series. The second gift is one of six Disneys given by Radio Pictures. They are: *The Old Mill*, *Clock Cleaners*, *Hawaiian Holiday*, *Pluto's Quintuplets*, *Donald's Ostrich* and *Lonesome Ghosts*. Mr. Ivor Montagu has given the Library a copy of the film *Bluebottles*, in the production of which H. G. Wells was concerned. Lastly, British Movietone News have given 11 reels of selected items of current history the future value of which is inestimable.

So far as the Loan Section is concerned, the Librarian reports that since it was reorganised in February of last year, both the number of borrowers using the facilities and the number of films sent out have more than doubled themselves, and both are still increasing.

Governing Body Decisions

Arising out of the very successful experiment organised by the Manchester Film Institute Society in putting on programmes of films illustrating the Art of the Film at the Manchester Art Gallery, the Governors decided to approach the National Gallery with a proposal that similar shows should be given in London. It is understood that the matter is still under consideration by the Trustees of the Gallery.

The Governors have endorsed an interesting proposal coming from the Institute's History Committee which suggested that it would be interesting to try and put together out of existing material or survivals, a film illustrating some simple subject like the development of some aspect of agriculture, or the history of fire-making, or the development of man's efforts to cross water. A series of viewings have already taken place and it appears that there is enough stuff in existence to show the way in which man's efforts to till the soil and prepare it for seed have developed from the primitive foot plough to present day multi-share tractor operations.

The Governors have accepted a plea for a reduced subscription which was put forward by several serving members of H.M. Forces who found that, though they were anxious not to discontinue their membership, their army pay was insufficient to allow them to do so. The Governors have accordingly decided that upon application of any member serving in H.M. Forces whose financial position is such as to make it difficult for him to pay the usual annual subscription, so long as he is engaged with H.M. Forces the Governors will accept from him the reduced subscription of 10*s*. so that his membership can be continued.

Mr. Bernard F. Gillett, the organiser of the Educational Campaign, continues to get round the country making contacts with directors of education, members of education committees and teachers. He finds that the cinema is being increasingly

used by leaders of youth organisations and that film appreciation is a very welcome topic of discussion. He finds in general that apparatus is being satisfactorily used, but in some cases the local director's promises do not keep pace with his practice! The four-day Film School for Training Colleges which was held at Nottingham early in the new year was a great success.

SCOTTISH FILM COUNCIL

The Council's Scottish Central Film Library is now entering the last few months of its three years' experiment which terminates in June, 1942. The progress made can best be indicated by the following statistics of reels despatched each month from the Library since it commenced operations in March, 1939.

	1939	1940	1941
Jan.	—	356	1,406
Feb.	—	467	1,706
Mar.	87	512	1,931
April	54	489	1,217
May	183	706	1,500
June	179	696	1,662
July	17	195	796
Aug.	35	106	727
Sept.	74	432	1,181
Oct.	183	1,104	2,533
Nov.	286	1,476	3,302
Dec.	353	1,403	3,344

The success of this experiment in the running of a Regional Film Library has exceeded all expectations and a wealth of experience and information has been gained which will prove invaluable in the future development of educational film libraries. A full report of the experiment is now being prepared for the Carnegie U.K. Trustees without whose financial support the experiment could not have been carried out.

The Sound-Silent Experiment

A preliminary experiment into the relative merits of the sound and silent films for teaching purposes is now being conducted in three Fifeshire Schools under the supervision of Dr. D. McIntosh, the Assistant Director of Education. On the experience of this preliminary experiment a wider and more thorough experiment will then be based. A sound version and a silent captioned version of each of the following films are at present being used: *Wheatlands*, *The Sparrow Howk*, *Washing Time at the Zoo*, *Water Power* and *A.B.C. of Oil.*

An increasing use of films is being made by Scottish Youth Clubs. The Scottish Youth Leadership Training Association and the Scottish Educational Film Association are anxious that this field of activity be properly organised and developed. As the result of a lecture and demonstration given by the Secretary of the Scottish Film Council at a Christmas Vacation Course for Youth Leaders in St. Andrews, the Scottish Youth Leadership Training Association proposes to set up a committee to conduct planned experiments in the use of educational films with Youth Clubs.

The Amateur Film Festival

The Scottish Amateur Film Festival has been held annually since 1934. The Scottish Film Council is keenly anxious to maintain the Festival but feels that owing to wartime conditions the number of new films produced by amateurs during the past 12 months will not justify a continuance of the Festival on the usual lines in 1942. The Council therefore has decided to hold a competition for all the best prize-winning films entered in the Festival during the past eight years. It is proposed to hold the final adjudication and public showing in the Cosmo Cinema, Glasgow, on Sunday, 8th March. There will be two sessions, one in the afternoon for non-fiction films and one in the evening for fiction films. Trophies will be awarded to the best film in each of the classes. The selection of the programmes will be made by a panel of adjudicators but as many of the audience will have already seen the films over the course of the previous eight festivals the final adjudication will be left to the ballot of the audience immediately after the showing of the films.

It is hoped that by 1943 there will be a sufficient accumulation of new films to justify the continuance of the Festival on the usual lines.

MANCHESTER FILM SOCIETY

The Manchester Film Institute Society has continued its work in association with the Manchester and Salford Film Society and at the last three shows the main films have been *La Grande Illusion*, *Lenin in October*, and *Le Dernier Tournant*. Three sub-standard shows have attracted big audiences to the Y.M.C.A. on Saturday afternoons. These exceptionally interesting programmes, have been called *Films of Our Allies* (with Czech, Russian and Chinese speakers), *Films of Science* (new and recent films), and *A Scrapbook of Film Comedy*, 1896–1933. *Our experience is that with careful planning and publicity and with new material available from the National Film Library and other sources, sub-standard programmes can play an increasing part in Film Society activities.*

The Society began an interesting experiment in October with a series of fortnightly public displays of films illustrating cinema art at the Manchester City Art Gallery. These programmes alternated with another series of actuality programmes presented by the Ministry of Information. The Society's

shows, given daily to encouragingly numerous audiences, have included so far: "From George Melies to Walt Disney," "British and American Documentaries," and "How Story Telling by Film Developed." The whole scheme and its potentialities will appeal to those libraries and galleries in other cities which seek to extend their cultural and informational services through the film medium.

During Manchester's week of Anglo-Russian Friendship in November, the Society helped considerably by arranging film displays at the Art Gallery and elsewhere, and the members of both Societies contributed generously to the Lord Mayor's Aid to Russia Fund. The Lord Mayor (Alderman Wright Robinson) has honoured us by accepting the office of President of the Branch.

THE BELFAST FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY

Activities were resumed in October with the publication of the first number of our *Film Review*, which now enters on its fifth season, with Miss Myfanwy Hammond as Editor. Plans were set on foot at the same time for a season of repertory shows. The first three of these have already taken place. At the first the main film was Renoir's *La Marseillaise*, which attracted a very big crowd, who keenly appreciated its political message of faith in the spirit of the French people. The documentary *Free France* admirably fitted the mood of the main film, and the Dutch *De Lichtwacht* and a Disney made an excellent contrast in coloured cartoons.

For the second show the main film was *Chapayev* and again the choice of a film about Russian guerrillas was a good topical attraction which brought in many people not ordinarily interested in Film Society shows. The supporting shorts were *Northern Outpost*, *Is Idleness a Vice* and the Polish *Studies from Chopin*.

At the third show the films shown were Vigo's *Zero de Conduite* and the Marx Brothers in *Monkey Business*. This made an interesting double feature contrasting the somewhat sinister surrealism of the French film with the craziness of the American clowns. Opinion about the former was very divided, but the show as a whole aroused great interest.

For the January show the Czech film *Janosek* has been booked.

Membership of the Society is still disappointingly small. Although large enough to enable the Society to carry on with a fair chance of a moderately successful season, it is not large enough to guarantee success at a time when any undertakings involve a certain amount of risk. Nevertheless the Committee of the Society are well pleased to feel that the Society is at least being kept alive, and with a moderate amount of luck we shall give seven shows during the current season, which is in fact one show more than we used to attempt in the easier times of peace.

BOY SCOUTS ASSOCIATION

The demand for the new film *Scouting Out of Doors* has been so great that two extra copies have had to be made. An extra copy of *Companions*—a film showing a day in camp with Scouts—has also been made. The Ministry of Information Scout film *Men of Tomorrow* is now completed and will be released in the New Year.

Scout Groups all over the country are making increasing use of sub-standard films, not only from the Boy Scouts Association's own film library but also from every other source as well.

The Association is now in process of gathering together extracts from news reels which have featured interesting Scout events during the period of the war.

GIRL GUIDES ASSOCIATION

The films in the Girl Guides Library have been in increasing demand during the past three months. There have been 85 bookings, and it has often been difficult to arrange for the films to be returned to Headquarters for examination and repair between showings.

Many requests for films have been received from County Youth Committees arranging Youth Weeks in their areas.

Few people realise the international side of Guiding, or that before the war there were 32 countries members of the World Association. A most popular film is one of the *Chalet* at Adelboden, which shows Guides from all these countries meeting there before the war. Another film in constant demand was taken at an international gathering in Hungary in the summer of 1939, where 4,000 Guides, representing nearly every country belonging to the World Association, camped together and made friends.

WORKERS' FILM ASSOCIATION

Mr. George Ridley, M.P., presiding at the first annual meeting of the Workers' Film Association since it became a registered Co-operative Society, stated in moving the acceptance of the annual report and balance sheet that although the war had prevented the Association from producing films which were envisaged in their early plans, they had been able to concentrate on the task which sooner or later had to be tackled of building a library of films suitable for distribution to the allied movements. He also welcomed the satisfactory conclusion of negotiations with the Co-

operative Movement which provided that the newly established film unit of the Co-operative Wholesale Society Ltd., should become the film production machinery of the Association. By this arrangement, the three great workers' movements, the Trades Union Congress, the Labour Party and the Co-operative Movement were linked together in the important field of education and propaganda by means of the film. With the combination of members, organisation and resources of the three Movements, it should be possible to exploit the medium which was now being universally recognised as one of the most important factors in bringing enlightenment to the average citizen.

U.S.S.R. Films

The meeting endorsed the action of the Secretary, Alderman Joseph Reeves, in approaching the Film Department of the Soviet Embassy with an offer to distribute Soviet substandard films as a contribution to the allied cause.

It was noted with pleasure that the Labour Party was considering the production of a film on the achievements of the workers in the various spheres of our national life during the last century.

Among other things reported was a decision to hold a film school for a period of one week at Oxford from 18th to 24th July, and a film conference in Manchester on 14th February.

YOUTH HOSTELS ASSOCIATION

The two films *Youth Hails Adventure* and the *Magic Shilling* are again in great demand for showing to audiences of hostellers and would-be hostellers all over the country. *Youth Hails Adventure* has been re-edited and additional captions inserted, to make the story easier to follow. The Association is now beginning to form a film library, of films showing hostels in different parts of the country. The 9.5 mm. film *Out of Town* made by amateurs of the Devon and Cornwall Regional Group is the first to be included in this collection.

I.A.C. 1942 CONTEST

The Institute of Amateur Cinematographers announce their 1942 Contest. The trophies to be competed for include the I.A.C. Challenge Trophy, the London Films Cup, *Daily Mail* Trophy, A.C.W. Plaques, I.A.C. Sound Film Trophy, etc. The cups will be held until the next contest. Certificates of Merit are also awarded.

The entrance fee for non-members is 7*s.* 6*d.* a film and entries must be received by the Hon. Secretary by March 21. The final adjudication will be held on April 11 and 12 and it is proposed to screen and announce the winning films on April 18.

Further information can be obtained from the Institute's offices, 50 High Street, Epsom, Surrey.

A NEW DOCUMENTARY PERIODICAL

The Association of Documentary Film Producers Inc., of 20 West 47th Street, New York City, has written to us to say that the Association's *Film News* originally intended as a newsletter for its membership, has been broadened so as to be of general interest to anybody concerned with factual films.

It is intended to issue *Film News* once a month, ten issues a year, with an annual subscription of 50 cents.

The issue which has been sent to us includes articles on the Documentary in Canada, 16 mm. sound recording, several book reviews and notes on new American Documentaries which are in production.

Mr. Jons Ivens is President of the Association.

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